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Examiners' Report January 2011

GCE Geography 6GE04 01

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Introduction

6GE04 01 Geographical Research January 2011

This January has shown that many more centres are evidently more confident with the generic mark scheme published on the Edexcel website, the indicative mark scheme and use of the Reports Plus feedback on past papers. The pre release focus and actual exam paper clearly identifies the need for a report style product, with a clear introduction, main body with sub-conclusions and a final conclusion. This was seen in the vast majority of responses although there were varying attempts at a methodology and ongoing referencing.

Question 1

This question produced a wide range of responses, with the key being the extent to which candidates could explain the link between tectonic processes and the variety of landscapes. Some managed to do this with an impressive grasp of subject vocabulary and knowledge of several landscapes which they then contrasted. Others simply listed all they knew about processes and landforms at plate boundaries and sometimes hotspots, rather than landscapes. Accuracy was often a major issue.

Most candidates considered both tectonic and seismic, with an emphasis on the former and managed to describe intrusive landscapes well, although many could not spell dyke correctly. They were less secure on other landscapes, tending to either give general statements such as there being “a lot of fold mountains” or concentrating on individual landforms such as Pinatubo.

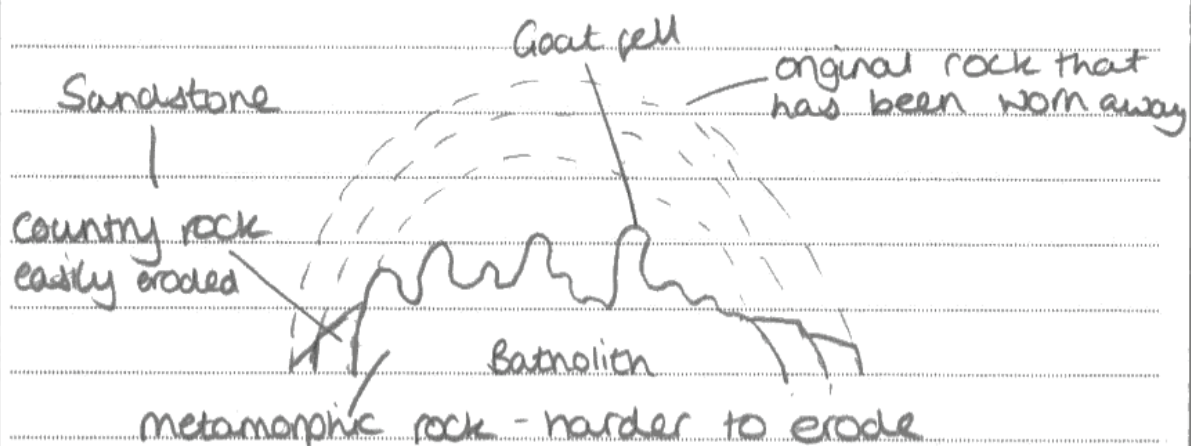
The most successful answers were those who structured their answers by place, using a variety of scales. Some interesting answers featured the West Coast of the U.S.A, considering the whole area in a unitary way due to the adjacency of the plate boundary, then subdividing local region, from Mt St Helens and the Cascade Mountains, to Yellowstone and the San Andreas fault, and its influence on the Californian drainage patterns. Direct comparisons worked well eg two different volcanoes in different locations, or two different parts of a rift valley, two fault lines but creating rift vs mountains, or two volcanic islands eg Iceland vs Isle of Arran or Hawaii. The EARV, German rift valley and the Deccan plateau were also popular. Some had researched the impact on the landscape at a more micro scale of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. A number had actually visited Iceland but apart from a brief mention did not make the most of their visit apart from vague references to standing on the Thingvellir rift. Few went further to investigate the impact of erosion/denudation on the landforms, and factor of time, with the exception of very well learned batholiths and their large scale impact on landscape as in SW UK.

Some drifted away from the physical focus into discussions of the impacts of human occupancy and a small, but significant, number of candidates based all or part of their introductions around Degg’s model and gave definitions of hazards and disasters, which was NOT the focus of this exam. Another issue was too long spent on details of plate tectonics and the historical Wegener, Pangea etc. Part of the problem was not unpacking the question enough in the introduction and not setting out a clear framework to follow.

A useful introduction seen was a table or a diagram of the landscape types and the landforms that went into its make-up. This along with locational detail reduced the time taken in the introduction. Most good reports included diagrammatic support, although the execution of these was very variable.

Use of diagrams

peak at 874m tall. Figure 1 shows the formation of Arran's hills.



Arran's hills and mountains



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Examiner Comments

This extract shows good incorporation of diagrams into the prose. It is clearly drawn and introduces the factors of intrusive magma being denuded over time to create a landscape not just the landform of Goatfell mountain.



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Examiner Tip

Simple labels such as cross section, plan view etc will help the examiner decipher even the most basic drawings. It should also be referenced or sourced.

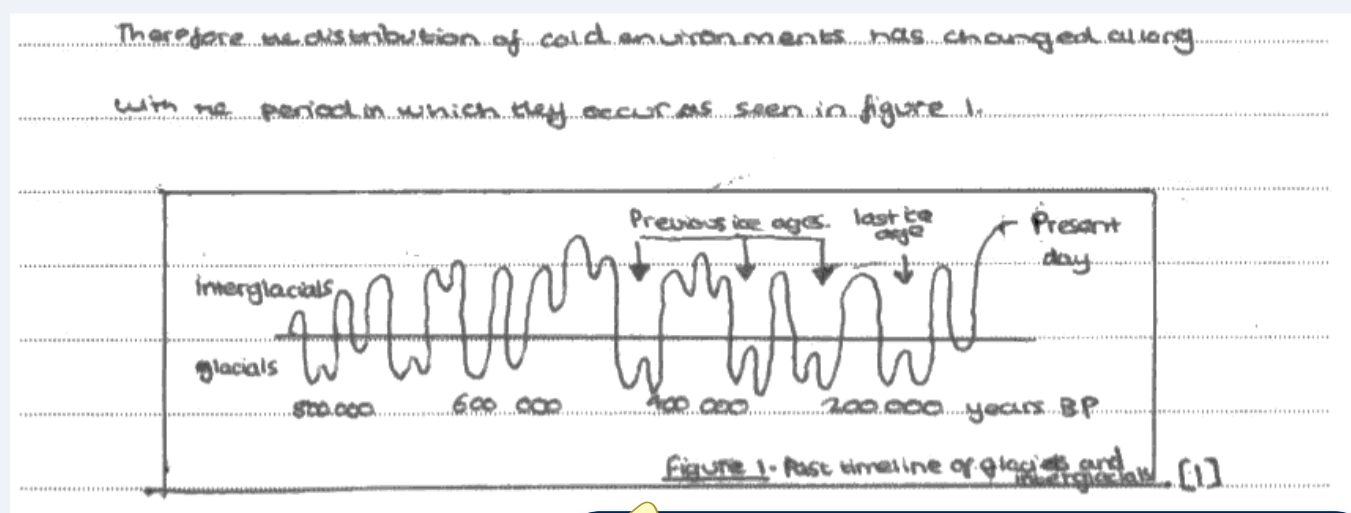
Question 2

This question was steered by process and by a case study approach. The latter was far less successful as the candidate was then too constrained. Many (but surprisingly not all) had good knowledge about Milankovitch, sunspots, ice advances etc but could not think about the question first and select what information would help them answer. It was “this is what I have learned and I must get it all down”. In the rush to do this they failed to focus and wrote too much that was not really pertinent to the question.

This question obviously needed a good understanding of climate changes, and most mentioned this but many had no real grasp of the theory. Diagrams of the Milankovitch Cycle appeared as ‘add ons’, and only more confident candidates explained and then linked this to changing distribution. Some went on to look at other causes especially the enhanced greenhouse effect, but sometimes became too focused on the effect of global warming altering the present extent of cold environments, and looked back to only a very recent past. Although this has some relevance it should only be after having looked at a more historical extent and the reasons for the changes.

Climate processes/factors were generally well known- continentality, latitude, altitude etc but were often left free standing and not incorporated into an answer. The element of comparison between present and past was not well done on the whole. The less able candidates focused on the distribution of cold environments past and present with little attempt at explaining why there has been a change and with little or no reference to how widespread they were. Some of the weaker answers just focused on glacial features. More able candidates recognised features that evidenced active and relict landscapes to illustrate the changing distribution of cold environments and introduced more complex concepts/factors such as Antarctic circumpolar current.

Showing complex information through simple sketches



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Examiner Comments

This candidate clearly recognised changing cold environments over the Quaternary Period.



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Examiner Tip

Pre-learnt diagrams can be explicitly related to the title by using terms from it; in this case the candidate could have stated Fig 1 shows how temperature has changed over the Pleistocene part of the Quaternary period, but there have also been major changes further back in geological time such as the Cryogenian period. The y axis would have benefitted from more labelling too.

Question 3

There were some excellent answers to this question that focused fully on the idea of controversy, explaining how different players view some of the techniques, past and present, for increasing food production. Students were good at defining food security/insecurity, but many drifted from the focus of increased food production, and only more able candidates kept the controversial element of the title going in their report. They simply needed to look at ways of increasing food production and how these methods caused disagreements, at differing scales/amounts. Many simply assumed all methods caused the same level of controversy, others assumed there wasn't any.

Mechanisation, intensification, irrigation, Blue Revolution, land reclamation schemes, use of the Aral Sea (although most of the crop was cotton) were all creditable. However, some strayed into fair trade and organic farming without any link to increased food production or proving any controversial aspect. The complexities of Fair Trade were not really understood by candidates who described it as being a way of improving the quality of life for farmers through securing food supply (and sale) despite Fair Trade not being aimed at increasing food quantity. Few understood that farmers do get paid more so they can re invest and therefore produce more, but there is a certification fee to join Fair Trade. Charitable and NGO schemes were not really relevant because they are not usually controversial - any analysis of bottom up approaches tended to focus on problems rather than controversies. There was surprising confusion between what students were calling the "Gene Revolution" and the Green Revolution. Disadvantages of GM crops were often limited to 'people don't know if they are safe' with less on cross pollination, fear of super weeds, taste issues, possible needs to adjust quota's, or viewpoints of the EU, UK versus Brazil or China for example. Some interesting case studies included current Chinese land grabbing in Africa as an extensification of their own internal production. The better responses linked the traditional theories of Malthus and Boserup-backed up with strong, referenced case study material. It was noticeable that there was some good research using broadsheet newspapers and reputable websites such as official organisations, NGOs and technical research. The bias of such sources tended to be overlooked however. At the lower end, candidates wrote all they knew about food production or even worse, supply schemes, and assumed opinions rather than giving proof or detail.

Methodologies are critical to access the top level in research and methodology of the generic mark scheme

Methodology

For this report a wide range of resources and materials have been accessed so to provide sufficient evidence to support case studies. I have produced a portfolio of evidence, from which I aim to create. The internet has been a brilliant resource, especially in the form of the BBC and WFP websites. Similarly, newspapers such as the Guardian, and Geopetsheet articles have provided regular up to date material. Other literature include the Geographical journal and other geography based books accessible in the library. Media has also been very helpful, with documentaries and ongoing series' such as Jimmy's Global Harvest. This wide spread of data is an attempt to avoid bias, however, I also acknowledge that some material may be outdated.



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Examiner Comments

This extract shows real thought and application to the topic in hand. A short prose paragraph or a simple table will suffice so long as the key aspect of selection is addressed, together with bias, reliability, topicality...



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Examiner Tip

If any field work is carried out, ensure it is specifically mentioned, located and quoted as a primary method of data collection

Question 4

Many more essay style rather than reports were seen in response to this question, and hence not so many marks for QWC could be awarded. Introductions often failed to give clear definitions of the terms that were to be used. This, and a lack of a clear framework led to many being mediocre that could have been quite sound. A case study by case study approach here could be successful although the best ones tended to 'cherry pick' information from a wide range of case studies to make a point or to offer clear comparisons. Common case studies were the Penan, Welsh, Amish, Bhutan, China, Liverpool, London and France. McDonaldisation dominated some reports unfortunately.

Although most candidates were quite successful in explaining why some cultures were more vulnerable and threatened than others, many seemed to have missed the cultural landscape element. Very few reports gave a sense of place of the chosen case studies, critical for the landscape element. For example many chose Tibet/Chinese and focus was on language/education with none discussing the original Chinese attitude to the Monasteries and the Dalai Lama. With clearer introductions tailored to the actual title, and not a pre-learnt one, and incorporated definitions the omission of landscape would have been less likely to have occurred. Overall, too many scripts used well-known case studies but used them descriptively and failed to focus on the comparisons, especially of severity of threat. The better responses to this particular question used good case study material such as Bhutan, Nepal, France, China, Amish and Basque country with facts and statistics to back up their discussion

Posing questions may help break down the title and focus efforts.

Globalisation - a threat to culture?

China has experienced dramatic cultural change since its government began to allow Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from TNCs. There has been an increase in global brands such as KFC, which had 1000 stores in China in 2006 (China Daily, 2006). Hyperglobalisers would argue that this is creating a homogenous culture in China as it is losing its unique street furniture and ~~ex~~ food, in favour of Western fast food stores. This has also spread social problems such as obesity, which now affects 100 million people in China (Sky News 2010). This

suggests 'that globalisation ~~has~~ ~~is~~ is changing social norms and behaviours in China, as more of its population begin to adopt aspects of Western culture.

The Chinese government's desire to develop has led to a change in China's cultural landscape. Many of the traditional narrow streets called 'hutongs' have been replaced by skyscrapers consisting of skyscrapers and concrete. This suggests that the Chinese government has chosen to sacrifice its cultural heritage in order to achieve economic development, making China's culture and cultural landscapes vulnerable to change.

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Examiner Comments

This example shows a very good selection of data on China and then goes on to contrast with French culture and cafe culture landscapes. It also weaves in some theory set up on differing viewpoints of globalisation as a threat in its introduction.

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Examiner Tip

Globalisation is an important factor in this particular title, but should be seen in conjunction with other factors too determining vulnerability and threats.

Question 5

There were a range of responses from a list of global health risks to causes of global health risks. The best did look at the causes of health risks and why they are more complex in some locations. There were many different ways that this question was tackled:

Some went for the LEDC/MEDC split, unfortunately not a range of development.

Others looked at socio-economic status which drew out variations within countries well.

Others contrasted environmental factors and socio-economic status; political will, a county's health and education service, transport networks, and environmental factors of geology and water supply and pollution.

There was an interesting use of topical events health risks posed by flooding in Pakistan (2010) and Queensland (2011). Some more peripheral examples were used, such as the post code lottery for English drugs increases management risk for diseases which can be treated, but that unfortunately people live in the 'wrong place'. The weakest answers analytically did not even distinguish between disease but chose to take a simplistic LEDC/MEDC approach with little reference to NICs or LDCs. Many class China as a MEDC. Overall, health risks were not always clearly well defined and even less likely to be split into human physical classifications. Where global warming was referred to, the impact on geographical spread of disease was explained well although the focus on complexity of disease attributable to global warming was often missing.

Better answers actually compared the prevalence of disease, e.g. malaria vs TB (both infectious). African Aids/HIV, cholera outbreaks in post-earthquake Haiti and in Zambia and Zimbabwe, China water and air pollution (Beijing, Linfen, Yangtze river), obesity and diabetes in UK/USA were all popular examples for infectious, sustained pollution and lifestyle-related diseases. Few recognised that an ageing population can be linked to more than just MEDCs and consequently the rise in degenerative diseases is a complexity evident in transition rising middle classes globally. A minority of candidates recognised that through cultural globalisation the impact of Western fatty convenience foods were being felt.

Report style

2.3 - Malaria

2.3.1 - Background

Malaria is a life threatening disease spread by caused by parasites transmitted by the bites of mosquitoes. In 2008 WHO reported that there were 1,000,000 deaths due to malaria world wide, annually. Malaria is only present ~~in~~ in tropical climates and near water; the perfect conditions for mosquitoes. (WHO)

2.3.2 - Bolifamba, South-West Cameroon

Malaria is prevalent throughout Cameroon due to perfect conditions for ~~mosquito~~ mosquitoes, lack of adequate vector control + drug resistance. In Bolifamba the poor living conditions also add to this as swamps, garbage heaps, stagnant pools of water surround their houses. For example 25% of Bolifamba's parasite density ~~is~~ is just in and around the garbage heaps. (Bioline)

2.3.3 - Subconclusion

~~The~~ Main cause of ~~Malaria~~ Malaria is quite simple, and its occurrence is due to the geography of the area + its climate conditions. For example, MIT researchers have shown that by levelling the land ^{to remove prevent pools forming} + planting the seeds of the Neem tree in pools of water can reduce ^{the} mosquito population by 80%, showing its cause to be simple and due to environmental causes. ~~It~~ This may be the case in other locations but specifically in Bolifamba, their causes are more complex due to a poor built environment.

and lack of wealth in the country to provide ^{adequate} healthcare ~~and~~ and vector control. This case study shows that a cause may be simple on its own, but in different locations ~~is~~ with different ^{levels of} development and ~~different~~ socioeconomic ~~or~~ factors can ~~complex~~ make the cause of the health risk even more complex.

Fig 3, the epidemiological ^{transition} model shows that as a country develops economy, the health risks change. Using Bolivia ^{it can} shows how ~~even for a small economy~~ less economically developed country can contribute economic factors also to the cause of health risks.



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Examiner Comments

This shows sensible sectioning and clear report style



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Examiner Tip

Just dividing up an essay into introduction-analysis-conclusion is not really report style. It needs a methodology section, sub conclusions, ongoing references

Question 6

Most managed to define leisure and tourism, although it didn't stop a fairly large number from forgetting about the leisure part of the question from there on in. Careful selection of activities such as mountain biking, skiing and golf (so long as for local residents as well as tourists) could help reduce the range of case studies needed. Models such as Butler's and Doxey's were used commonly, as was the pleasure periphery carrying capacity and the wilderness continuum. Better reports tended to use a model as the framework for their answer.

Common case studies included Yellowstone, Antarctica, Kenya, Costa del Sol, Machu Pichu, Galapagos, Lake District, Cairngorms. A number used effectively small-scale areas in the UK - Glastonbury, various parks, farms, and quoted fieldwork in for instance, Cheddar Gorge, Yorkshire or Studland Bay. Trump's plan for a golf course in Scotland was used well for a leisure case study. Case studies were not well used when they became a description of the place including every management technique employed and losing site of the players involved. Some, not always convincingly, justified Dubai as rural/urban fringe and talked about activities on the desert fringe.

Conflicts were generally identified, though some did manage to forget to say what they were, identifying who the conflicts were between and not what they were. Good candidates were able to show that numbers had increased at sites and the best identified that there were not just greater numbers but different demands and that sometimes the conflicts were between groups of players themselves. Some drew effective simple conflict matrices.

Those who went back to the title and addressed whether conflicts are becoming more complex did well, as did those who put forward the idea that conflicts are becoming more complex for other reasons or that conflicts varied for other reasons eg fragility of ecosystem.

Use of the title

This then often leads to complex conflicts, which are tensions and disagreements among the key players.

The case studies that I have chosen to use to demonstrate the way in which complex conflicts are created as more key players use rural landscapes for leisure and tourism purposes are: The Galapagos Islands, Antarctica, ^{and} The Cairngorm's National Park, ~~and~~ ~~Shedden Gorge~~. I have chosen these locations as I believe they clearly demonstrate how complex conflicts are arising.

In contrast to this however, I will also be using Santa Lucia - cloud forest to demonstrate how, as more key players are using rural landscapes for leisure and tourism, complex conflicts are being resolved.

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Examiner Comments

To get full marks, a brief statement was needed on the players involved: people and governments: for example individuals, NGOs, celebrities, international organisations and national-local governments. This student did not separate out the players enough to get full marks in the introduction, although introduces some complexity into the discussion by choosing a case study which shows that management may reduce conflict between players

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Examiner Tip

Use the terms in the exam title constantly throughout the report

Paper Summary

Most candidates used the **planning page**, ranging from 3 or 4 words to an excessive 3 pages. Most plans were a page long, jotting down case studies, definitions, models, and diagrams, and used the generic mark scheme 'DRACQ' ideas. Some had ticked off their case studies/facts as they worked their way through their answer, so making obvious use of their plan.

The **Definitions and introductory** section showed better justified framework for case studies to be used, although the concept of **focus** eluded many students who had pre-prepared a response and could not adapt to the precise exam title. Increasing numbers were concept driven in structure rather than descriptive 'plodding' through case studies, although the latter format may be better for some titles like Q 1 this time, so long as these are comparative and evaluated. However, models were still often quoted and not really used subsequently. Any **pre release** statement including terms such as: different, role, complex, degree, should automatically flag up the need for evaluation and **criteria** to base the forthcoming exam report on—not just the need for rote learning of facts and case studies and a pre-learnt introduction which may not fit the precise title given. NB the two foci in Q 1 and 2 this series did need much accurate factual material on the causes of tectonic landscapes and causes of cold environment distributions respectively. The following table suggests how the December 2010 pre release and subsequent exam title generated suggestions of possible **frameworks** to use for the final product.

Option	Pre release	Jan 2011 exam Question	To focus on in introduction and subsequent report -- a framework for the report:
1	<p>Explore the varying impact of both volcanic (extrusive and intrusive) and seismic processes on landscapes.</p> <p>Research different locations to draw out the importance of tectonic activity in creating a variety of contrasting landscapes.</p>	<p>Explain why tectonic processes produce a variety of contrasting landscapes</p>	<p>Command: Explain why: ie reasons/factors not just description needed -linked to landscape type-not just landform. Factors will include tectonic processes, time, denudation.</p> <p>Key words:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tectonic processes (extrusive intrusive volcanic + seismic) • variety of landscapes which must contrast <p>Therefore framework by process or varieties in landscape (latter proved more successful)</p>

Option	Pre release	Jan 2011 exam Question	To focus on in introduction and subsequent report -- a framework for the report:
2	<p>Explore the links between climatic processes and the distribution of cold environments today and why that distribution has been different in the past.</p> <p>Research a range of different active and relic glacial and periglacial environments which are the product of specific climatic processes and climate change.</p>	<p>Explain why the distribution of cold environments was more widespread in the past than it is at present.</p>	<p>Command : Explain why: ie Reasons/factors not just description needed -linked to where cold environments are now and in past.</p> <p>Key words</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution ie locational patterns • more widespread than at present <p>Therefore framework by either timescale (past/present) or process and less easily by location since this will end in repetition.</p>
3	<p>Explore the costs and benefits of strategies to increase food production in order to improve food security.</p> <p>Research contrasting locations to draw out the range and scale of issues associated with increasing food production</p>	<p>Many attempts to reduce food insecurity by increasing food production are controversial. Discuss.</p>	<p>Command word: Discuss, ie the pros and cons of the problem of food production (not supply) using examples from methods promoting different views -intensification, extensification</p> <p>Key words</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • food production • Controversial- NB the pre release uses 'issues' • many -perhaps not all are controversial? <p>Therefore framework by attempt/strategy linked to type and strength of controversy/issue</p>
4	<p>Explore how external threats and internal vulnerability vary in their impacts on cultures and landscapes.</p> <p>Research contrasting locations and examples to show why the impacts of these pressures vary in their severity and type.</p>	<p>Explain why some cultures and cultural landscapes are more vulnerable and threatened than others</p>	<p>Command word :Explain why ie give reasons why not just describe</p> <p>Key words</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some -ie a choice of more as opposed to less affected examples • vulnerable -internal characteristics • threatened- by inside and outside/ external sources. <p>Therefore framework by different culture /landscape may be easiest</p>

Option	Pre release	Jan 2011 exam Question	To focus on in introduction and subsequent report -- a framework for the report:
5	<p>Explore the complex environmental and socio-economic causes of different health risks.</p> <p>Research current causes of differing health risks in contrasting locations at different levels of development.</p>	<p>Explain why the causes of current health risks in some locations are more complex than others.</p>	<p>Command word :Explain why ie give reasons why not just describe</p> <p>Key words:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current ie recent/ongoing health risks • Some locations have less causes of health risk, others more complicated or complex <p>Therefore framework by choosing different locations in MEDC NIC LEDC LDC may be easiest (NOT just simplistic MEDC-LEDC split) or by environmental and socio-economic cause.</p>
6	<p>Explore how increasing and more diverse use of the rural landscape for leisure and tourism activities may lead to complex conflicts as more players are involved.</p> <p>Research different leisure and tourism activities in contrasting locations which show a range of conflicts involving a variety of players.</p>	<p>As more players use rural landscapes for leisure and tourism, conflicts become more complex. Discuss.</p>	<p>Command word discuss, ie the pros and cons of the problem using examples in both leisure and tourism .</p> <p>Key words</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More players-in numbers and type and demands on rural areas • Conflicts between these players • Levels of complexity from both sheer number of players and differing types of players-NB the become more aspect suggesting a time frame <p>Therefore framework by timescale perhaps based on location/casestudy</p>

Research and Methodology

The methodology section of the mark scheme was tackled more confidently, with either simple tables or prose paragraphs discussing the validity, authenticity, reliability and topicality of the sampled material used. It usually appeared after the Introduction, although some chose to locate this after each sub section or just before the conclusion. Common descriptors included academic, peer reviewed, cross referenced. However some spent far too long on a general ramble about the perils of Wikipedia.

Research

This needs to be showcased through accurate, well selected information, rather like evidence in a court of law. Candidates had dramatically polarised knowledge about tectonic landscapes and cold environments in particular, disappointing given the choice of a more physical geography option

inevitably means the learning of often quite complex physical processes and outcomes. Research was also varied in cultural landscapes and food production methods. The pre release is designed to focus down last minute preparation, and there was evidence that many candidates, or perhaps their centres, wanted a different focus to be chosen unfortunately which may have reduced marks awarded on their selection of data.

Analysis

This is best showcased as the research is presented, not as two separate sections of research ie case study factfiles then a separate analysis section. Constant referral back to the title will help ongoing focus on the precise title set. Many successfully approached the question via a series of comparison case studies eg successful v unsuccessful, less or more complex, or by type of process or case studies illustrating a particular model.

Ongoing evaluation

This was much more obvious, with many students flagging it up as a mini sub-conclusion. The final conclusion is best tackled by grouping together and comparing/contrasting any case studies/concepts covered, and should not contain new material.

Conclusions

Many students are confident now in evaluating as they go, often with an obvious mini section titled 'sub conclusion'. Final concluding comments were most successful when attempts were made to group the case studies/information used in the main body of the report, without including new information or new examples

Quality of written communication

The use of sensible subheadings was much more evident. Few showed timing issues, and most used the planning page effectively. However, candidates need to be able to be more flexible in tailoring their sub-titles to the flow of the question. Best are reports which explicitly compare and contrast using terms such as 'in contrast', 'however', 'opposite', 'whereas' 'similarly'.

Detailed sourcing and referencing is becoming more commonplace. The range went from Wikipedia, tabloids, KS3 and GCSE text books(all less recommended at A-Level on the whole) to UNESCO,USGS, BAS,WHO. The Economist, Edexcel text and revision guides (fully linked to the authors with dates), and even quoted sections appeared.

There was more use of ongoing referencing and foot notes and less basic bibliography lists at the end. There were also many creditable references to recent TV programs, e.g. Jimmy's Farm, Ice man, and Bruce Perry's Arctic Adventure. A significant number, however, just said 'this came from an A2 geography book' or 'Google'.

Talks and visits were quoted, but few made full use of their fieldwork experiences.

There was a pleasing increasing use of diagrams but these need to be better incorporated into the question and not just left "floating" within the script with the examiner left to make the linkages or worse just drawn at the start to get them out of the way before the analysis. Big, Annotated and Bold may be useful to remember.

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